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Book Review: If Women Rose Rooted: A Life Changing Journey to Authenticity and Healing

Katherine T. Ziemke¹

Keywords: women's narrative, historical, eco-feminist, archetype, myth, stories, conscious femininity, transformation, psychology, Celt culture, heroine's journey.....

In *If Women Rose Rooted*, author Sharon Blackie leads readers on an eco-heroine's journey of discovery and re-connection with her own inner self by connecting with the earth and its many non-human life forms. A psychologist, a masterful storyteller, and an eco-spiritual guide, Blackie's book is a transformative pilgrimage which delves into understanding the origin of women's false narratives and replaces them with creative, powerful, and wise archetypes taken from historical, mythological, and modern stories.

This multidimensional and multi-textural collage is at once a memoir; a road map complete with references; multiple anecdotal stories; a journey through ancient Celt cultures and mythology; and a case for connection with the earth in a captivating ecofeminist's story. Blackie holds the reader's anticipation in each page with fresh ways of uncovering self, while showing how our earth-bonds both strengthen our narratives and free our souls.

The source of women's often flawed internal narratives such as self-effacement and putting others ahead of ourselves, Blackie deems, is rooted in society's straying from the natural world. She supports this assertion in chronicles of mythological stories, rooted in cultural antiquity. Veering from the natural order of the earth, she says, is what created society's patriarchal expectations and its

subsequent restrictive controls upon women.

Author Sharon Blackie suggests that modern culture treats women as highly sexualized *objects* when they are young and up until their beauty begins to fade. After that point, women are completely socially devalued. Wise women, as seen in indigenous peoples, are valued for leading their entire tribes in the best direction. But this "Wise Woman" phenomenon is almost never seen outside cultural antiquity, indigenous tribes, or in myths. (Blackie, 2019, p. 278) All the many valuable contributions women can make at this later stage in life and they are completely devalued by society because they no longer fulfil the sex-object persona that modern culture dictates. In my estimation, something is really wrong with this picture. Yet there is a positive side. The light of understanding this crazy phenomenon brings with it a power to change. Bravo to Blackie for bringing it to light!

Blackie asserts that understanding the ancient stories and reconnecting to the earth allows women to break free of the socially constructed world and retreat into the instinctual world of the wild land. In understanding the stories and reconnecting with the earth, a more natural definition of womanhood evolves, one more inclusive of other ways of being, allowing a woman's true self, with all her gifts to come forth.

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“The Grail myth is one of the foundation myths of the Celtic culture” (Blackie, 2019, p. 234). Symbolically, Blackie says, the Grail is the feminine power, the spear the masculine. When these two powers are properly united all will be right in the world. To properly unite the powers, Blackie believes the world must bring creative feminine energy into equilibrium with masculine energy to bring about balance. Blackie charges, the women’s task is to bring humanity back into equilibrium. She quotes Jungian Marion Woodman as calling this “conscious femininity” (2019, p. 290).

Blackie grounds the work in her discourse between herself, psychoanalyst Carl Jung, and Joseph Campbell, author of *A Hero’s Journey*. Although the book covers a cross-section of important fields its strongest contributions may be in psychological narratives, eco-feminism, and Celtic cultural antiquity.

If Women Rose Rooted is for those searching for meaning. With never a dull moment, it reads like a novel but, is equally worthy for either academic or popular reading. It serves a population of women much like myself helping us reinvent ourselves by first exposing and then reconstructing our internal narratives. Through gurgling well-springs, rocky coastlines, dark caves, perilous bogs, and captivating forests, each landscape lends ancient myths and stories that add to restoring life’s balance and honoring our true self while developing an understanding that we belong to the earth.

The gems of cultural antiquity are equally fascinating and instructive in more ways than just for the narrative. One of the foundational Celt myths which Blackie refers to several times in the book is the mythological story of the sacred wells, the well-maidens, and their freely given gifts in service to the land, taken from “The Elucidation” (Blackie, 2019, p. 29). The myth tells a tale of disrespect, even abuse, of the well-maidens, followed by more of the same causing the land to lie in crusty waste,

“barren and scorched” (2019, p. 32).

Within the story narratives, Blackie masterfully emboldens the reader’s immersion in alternate retrospective and prospective lives. She gives permission for a messy and lengthy self-discovery and urges readers to find their own paths while gently warning of the repercussions of not doing so...an achy sinking feeling, deep rooted unhappiness, and living a life you know in your heart you were not meant to live.

Blackie shares her own personal recovery and journey to authenticity, which began with the land and the importance of finding her own life-giving “place” in the world (2019, p. 147). The land and non-human living things had no expectations imposed upon her which allowed for her simply to be herself, discover, and tune-in to the world.

Making a compelling argument for the earth, Blackie says we all know about environmental woes and think it is *too bad* but, return to whatever else we are doing swiftly thereafter. Essentially, we go about our regular business of life and disconnect from the message, thinking someone else will handle the problem. We don’t connect with our roots to the land because we no longer live with the earth, we are too far removed in an industrialized existence. Blackie makes a strong plea for the betterment of all, “Who will stand up for the Earth, if not the women who are of it and a mirror of it?” (2019, p. 275). She urges that we somehow find a way to pursue an intentional connection to the natural world both for ourselves and for our planet.

There was a discussion near the end of the book which spoke to the point of women’s direction. I think this subject is pertinent as so many people wrestle in indecision with what direction to go. Author Sharon Blackie says to find direction, introspect on “what breaks your heart, ...[understand where] your passion lies,” and identify your key skills (Blackie, 2019, p. 347). With these three things Blackie says,

“you have your initiative” (2019, p. 347).
Eureka!

If Women Rose Rooted is an amazing read and a game changer in terms of perception on internal narratives. There are countless

nuggets of wisdom packed within the pages of this book and every page was entirely engrossing. After reading it, I was wholeheartedly inspired to throw off society’s social constructs and narratives and seek my own path.

References

Blackie, S. (2016). *If women rose rooted: A life-changing journey to authenticity and belonging*. September Publishing